

Linguistic and Cultural Changes Relating to Kinship in the Columbus Somali Community

Undergraduate Research Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for graduation “with Honors Research
Distinction in Linguistics” in the undergraduate colleges of the Ohio State University

by
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April 2016

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I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Since the 1980's, the Somali Civil War has caused millions of families to seek refuge all around the world. Nearly 40,000 Somalis have made Columbus, Ohio their new home. Eight thousand miles of land and sea separate them from their motherland, causing serious problems for the maintenance of their cultural traditions, including language, and forcing them increasingly to adapt. Even within their local Somali network, their old way of life no longer may be feasible in this new environment. Family and cultural traditions may become threatened, and parents face the pressure of being responsible for upholding them. Among these traditions, language use and cultural practices such as kinship systems are especially connected to Somali identity in Columbus. This study specifically seeks to explore to what extent Somali kinship and its expression in language has been affected in the diaspora community in Columbus.

The relationship between kinship and cultural practice differs from one society and its language to the next. Provided that cultural practices related to kinship can differ significantly across societies, they can undergo change upon contact with another language and culture. Immigration in particular leads to significant contact and conflict with other cultural systems. Relatively few studies have explored how these changes relate to the larger picture of maintaining kinship systems in a new country. Among these, Jourdan's (2000) study of kinship terminology changes in the Solomon Islands and Dickson's (2015) study of maintenance of kinship terms in aboriginal Australia describe the impact of language and culture contact on kinship systems in those communities. Bartoo (2010) discusses social motivations for linguistic changes of Somalis in Kenya but does not explicitly mention kinship. In effect, no studies to date have investigated the impact of contact with new cultures and languages on the maintenance of Somali kinship terms and related cultural practices. Whether Somali terms are maintained or lost may determine how traditional familial roles are enacted in the diaspora, and how roles are enacted may dictate how Somali terms are maintained.

II. PREVIOUS STUDIES

While there are several studies of Somali diasporas, only Bartoo (2010) discusses linguistic changes as related to social motivations to assimilate. Bartoo investigates the social

incorporation of Somali refugees in Kenya, targeting their linguistic adaptations as the focus. Because the people in question, Somali refugee teens, were immersed in different languages (English, Kiswahili, and Sheng) and a cultural context unlike their own, their Somali was inclined to change. Bartoo lists Somali teens' social motivations to change as the expression of social identity, a way to gain linguistic power, expression of gender differences and dominance, and the need for social integration. These social motivations show that their position as refugee teens in a foreign society makes them particularly susceptible to language change. Other factors influencing language change include the influence of the individual's parents and the influence of the individual's cultural beliefs. Bartoo observes that maintaining Somali would require parents to consistently communicate in it. Additionally, preserving the language is impractical if the cultural worldview of its speakers is abandoned. This means that "acquiring the majority language of the host country should represent a gateway to participating in the culture of that country" (2010: 48). Most emphasized by Bartoo is how closely Somali social practice and language practice are linked. Essentially, if one is lost, the other is lost. If one is maintained, the other is likely maintained. Although Bartoo presents a picture of the social factors affecting linguistic and cultural change, her observations did not discuss kinship as related to changes in cultural practice. Jourdan (2000), and Dickson (2015) address this topic more thoroughly, showing specifically that changes in kinship terminology both reflect and motivate cultural changes.

Jourdan (2000) records notable changes in kinship terminology arising from contact between Pijin and indigenous languages in the Solomon Islands. After the 1800's, Pijin was introduced into the Solomon Islands due to the increased presence of merchants and trading. This language exhibited far fewer distinctions in kinship terminology than the preexisting languages, and speakers had to accommodate. With regard to one such change, most of the Solomon Islands vernacular kin terms varied depending on the gender of ego, but the new Pijin did not contain these distinctions. For instance, all Pijin speakers commonly use *brata* and *sista* just like their English equivalents 'brother' and 'sister,' regardless of speaker gender. For a male speaker of one of the original vernaculars, Nduke, *tughana* means 'sibling of the same sex,' so in this instance, 'brother,' and *luluna* means 'sibling of the opposite sex,' here being 'sister.' A female Nduke speaker would say *luluna* for her brother and *tughana* for her sister. Jourdan theorizes that

ego-gender distinctions collapsed in Pijin because society was so male-dominated that the male speaker words were adopted by everyone. Some vernacular male ego terms became used as Pijin terms (*kasin*, *anti*, and *ankol* for ‘cousin,’ ‘aunt,’ and ‘uncle’). During a time where kin were less involved with each other due to the island’s urbanization, Jourdan states, “if a generic label could be found, that could be used to refer to these absent kin” (2000: 116). As this was occurring, the popularity of self-reciprocal terms increased in Pijin, such as a woman referring to her nephew as *anti*. Jourdan hypothesizes that this is a new way to index closeness with a family member during a time when emphasis on kinship relations are shifting to be more divided between nuclear families and their extended groups. While the vernacular kin terms remained unchanged, vernacular speakers’ preferred use of the Solomon Islands Pijin shows these language transformation processes reflect changes in the social significance of family members. Jourdan’s study acknowledges the link between language and social roles but neglects to look deeper, investigating what is retained and transformed from the original languages when multiple languages come in contact.

Dickson (2015) documents a situation in which Marra, an Australian aboriginal language, began to lose its kinship terms. Once the Kriol language took root in the area, the Marra people began to use exclusively Kriol kin terms, and many meanings indexed by Marra kin terms were lost. For example, Marra uses some terms based on birth order, such as *limbil* for ‘younger brother’ and *baba* for ‘older brother,’ while Kriol lacks these distinctions. Likewise, Marra has unique terms for affinal relations, or those of a spouse’s family, and Kriol does not. Table 1 shows the difference in number of kinterms existing in Marra and Kriol.

	Marra	Kriol
Kinterms attested (roots only)	47	32
Kin categories after collapsing minimally marked gender distinctions	27	24

Table 1. Marra and Kriol number of kinterms, adapted from Dickson (2015)

In other cases, kinship terms in Marra have been preserved in modified form in Kriol. One example of this is skewing. This occurs in Marra when terms unique to a particular generation,

such as mother's brother, *gardigardi*, leak across generations and become used for mother's brother's son and mother's brother's grandson, which previously had distinct terms. Dickson reports that the function of skewing is cultural (2015: 232). Certain family members play certain roles in traditional Marra ceremonies, and skewing these kin terms strengthens the chances of these ceremonies being maintained. These highly ritualized ceremonies relate to land tenure, totems, and traditional law. Because Kriol does not have skewing of these terms, Dickson reports that the importance of ceremonies is given less emphasis. Thus, ceremonies are held less often and in fewer towns. To compensate for this, Kriol has developed twelve self-reciprocal terms which are not present in Marra. When a man refers to his father-in-law as *lambarra*, his father-in-law can refer back to him as the same. Interestingly, these only become self-reciprocal with males. The invention of these self-reciprocal terms is motivated by desire to maintain ceremonial roles so the aboriginal culture is not lost.

Dickson's report on the change from Marra to Kriol in Australian aboriginal kin terms shows that language shift is not always language loss. Indeed distinctions in Marra did not carry over to Kriol, but Kriol also uses distinctions not available to Marra. The innovation of Kriol speakers demonstrates that cultural practices can endure through language shifts.

Each of the previous studies highlights potential factors for change with respect to kinship terminology. Some sources emphasize the cultural and social implications, and some detail kinship hierarchies. Bartoo (2010) shows that a significant motivator behind refugee linguistic orientations is desire for integration in the new community. Jourdan (2000) and Dickson (2015) find that inconsistencies in kinship terminology in a contact situation are oftentimes due to cultural disparities. These studies have prompted me to ask three main questions:

To what extent do Somalis in Columbus and their children preserve traditional Somali kinship terms?

Are there differences in kinship term use across generations?

Does language loss imply a loss of culture and kinship terminology in particular?

Based on the literature, I hypothesize that loss or preservation of the Somali kinship system in Columbus would be most likely influenced by the degree to which Somali immigrants preserve or change their social relationships and cultural practices within the family. Because none of the studies links kinship term changes directly to specific social practices within the family, this study aims to address and build on the contributions of Bartoo, Jourdan, and Dickson to probe into changes in kinship terms among Somalis in Columbus as they adapt to other ways of life brought about by migration. As a first step to understand what types of changes have occurred in the Columbus diaspora, it is useful to compare the English and Somali kinship systems and terms.

III. COMPARISON OF SOMALI AND ENGLISH KINSHIP SYSTEMS

Schwimmer (2003) says there are six basic types of kinship systems. Somali employs the Sudanese system, while English follows the Eskimo system. The systems described are in reference to Ego, the “speaker” who is the focal point of the system. For the purpose of this study, only two generations, Ego’s generation and the ascending generation, will be examined.

The Sudanese system is the most complicated type. It typically occurs with patrilineal societies, and every relative on either side of the family has a unique title. In a Somali nuclear family, Ego’s mother and father have their own terms, *hooyo* and *aabbe*. Meanwhile Ego’s ‘brother’ and ‘sister’ are derived from the same word but have suffixes distinguishing between genders (*walaalka* and *walaasha*). Outside of the nuclear family, different names are assigned to the siblings of Ego’s mother and father. Thus, Ego’s ‘father’s sister’ is *eeddo* while ‘mother’s sister’ is *habar*. ‘Father’s brother,’ *adeer*, uses a different term than ‘mother’s brother,’ *abti*. In the descending generation, ‘mother’s brother’s children’ are *ina’abti* yet ‘mother’s sister’s children’ are *habar wadaag*, ‘father’s brother’s children’ are *ina’adeer*, and ‘father’s sister’s children’ are *ina’eeddo*. These terms may be additionally marked to show gender of the child. The feminine suffix *-da*, which has allomorphs *-ta* and *-sha*, appears in *ina’abtida* to mean ‘mother’s brother’s daughter.’ In *ina’abtiga*, the masculine suffix *-ga*, with allomorphs *-ka* and *-ha*, translates to ‘mother’s brother’s son.’ As previously mentioned, this is the most complex system as it assigns unique titles to each relative’s position. Because there are so many distinctions in this system, the social importance of the non-nuclear, or extended, family is reflected. Extended family must have a strong presence in Ego’s life in order for Ego to have use

for these terms; otherwise, the terms would be forgotten. Figure 1 below illustrates the division in Somali kinship where Ego's mother's and father's families have different sets of kinship terms.

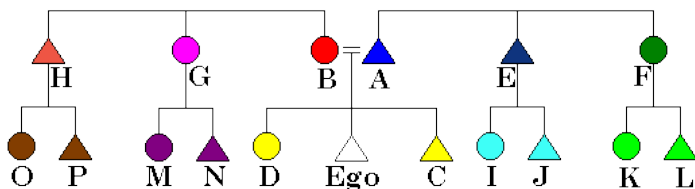


Figure 1. Somali kinship system. Triangle represents male, circle female. Each color represents a single kinship term (excluding gender markers).

Position on Figure 1		Somali	English
C	Brother	Walaal	Brother
D	Sister	Walaal	Sister
A	Father	Aabbe	Father
E	Father's brother	Adeer	Uncle
F	Father's sister	Eeddo	Aunt
I, J	Father's brother's child	Ina'adeer	Cousin
K, L	Father's sister's child	Ina'eeddo	Cousin
B	Mother	Hooyo	Mother
H	Mother's brother	Abti	Uncle
G	Mother's sister	Habar	Aunt
O, P	Mother's brother's child	Ina'abti	Cousin
M, N	Mother's sister's child	Habar wadaag	Cousin

Table 2. Kinship terms adapted from Lewis (1994).

While Lewis' terms in Table 2 are traditionally accurate, other literature elaborates and expands on these terms. Lewis published his work in 1994, reporting that "*walaal* is not extended to cousins." Kapchits and Porkhomovsky (2008) assert the exact opposite, that this term has become more generalized. They allude to Somali family references containing multiple meanings that Lewis did not observe.

Kapchits and Porkhomovsky have compiled a more extensive list of kinship terms, where the list of nouns includes gendered definite article affixes. The most notable difference between their data and Lewis' findings is the use of *walaal* as another term for cousin. Lewis found that

Somali distinguishes between every member in the extended family, evident in cousin term distinctions. Kapchits and Porkomovsky state that unique cousin terms do exist but can be more easily referred to as *walaal*. In fact, *walaal* is also reported as a polite term of address to any person. Unfortunately Kapchits and Porkomovsky, while noting this wider range of reference terms, did not explore many factors that would prompt Somalis to choose the broad word *walaal* over the more specific terms.

Position on Figure 1		Somali	English
C	Brother	Walaal-ka	Brother
D	Sister	Walaal-sha	Sister
A	Father	Aabbe-ha, aabbo-ha, adoo-ga	Father
E	Father's brother	Adeer-ka	Uncle
F	Father's sister	Eeddo-da	Aunt
I	Father's brother's daughter	Ina-adeer-ta	Cousin
J	Father's brother's son	Ina-adeer-ka	Cousin
K	Father's sister's daughter	Ina-eeddo-da	Cousin
L	Father's sister's son	Ina-eeddo-ha	Cousin
B	Mother	Hooyo-da	Mother
H	Mother's brother	Abti-ga	Uncle
G	Mother's sister	Habaryar-ta	Aunt
O	Mother's brother's daughter	Ina-abti-da	Cousin
P	Mother's brother's son	Ina-abti-ga	Cousin
M	Mother's sister's daughter	Habarwadaag-ta, ina-habreed-da	Cousin
N	Mother's sister's son	Habarwadaag-ga, ina-habreed-ka	Cousin

Table 3. Kinship terms adapted from Kapchits and Porkhomovsky (2008).

In the Eskimo system that English follows, kinships relations have a different organization. Illustrated in Figure 2, the English system is bilateral, meaning it has no terminological division between patrilineal and matrilineal relationships. Instead, the English kinship system is organized around only one set of terms. As far as the nuclear family is concerned, the same distinctions apply to English as they do to Somali. The English system uses different words for parents, 'mother' and 'father,' and female sibling and male sibling differ as 'brother' and 'sister.' Beyond the nuclear family, the English system has a different organization than the Somali system, characterized by far fewer distinctions. While Somali uses *habar* for 'mother's sister' and *eeddo* for 'father's sister,' English levels these terms out. 'Mother's sister' and 'father's sister' are both conceptualized as 'aunt,' and 'mother's brother' and 'father's brother' are both

‘uncle.’ Further, the children of all siblings of Ego’s parents are all referred to as ‘cousin,’ regardless of the person’s gender or parent. With these rules, the English kinship system makes a sharper distinction between nuclear and non-nuclear relatives than the Somali system. The nuclear family is much more differentiated than extended family, thus this system is typically used in societies where there is a stronger emphasis on individual ideals and immediate family.

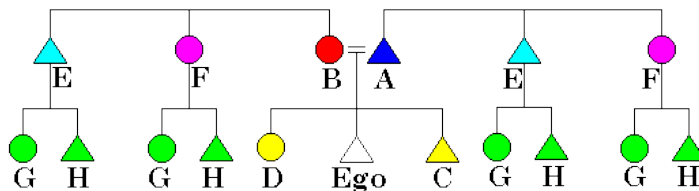


Figure 2. English kinship system. Triangle represents male, circle female. Each color represents a single kinship term (excluding gender markers).

IV. CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF KINSHIP SYSTEMS

According to Lewis (1994), the kinship terms reflect the Somali kinship hierarchy which is based on the dominance of man over woman. In a marriage, men and women cannot be from the same clan, and their children’s clan affiliation is determined by the man’s. The Somali language attaches value to the degree of connection to the spouses’ extended families and clans. “Those who are close” are the father’s family, while “those who are distant” are the mother’s family. When the mother’s side of a family is referred to, her brother is given deference by calling it *reer abti* or ‘mother’s brother’s people.’ This strong sense of allegiance to the father’s family in Somali culture does not quite exist in American culture. This suggests that Somalis have to adjust to a very different way of viewing kinship relationships in America.

Helander (1991) does provide some cultural implications associated with Somali kinship terminology. He directly addresses the issue of how *walaal* can be used in a sense broader than just ‘sibling,’ saying that social proximity is critical for Somali relationships. If there is an absence of family members falling into specific categories, such as mother’s sister’s son, the term for this relationship may be less prevalent. Because *walaal* has religious and honorific connotations attached to it, it would be an acceptable substitute for one’s *habarwadaagga*. Knowingly invoking *walaal* instead of a more specific term is a tactic to produce a desired effect. As stated, the high degree of respect attached to *walaal* is not necessarily present in the

family-only terms. Different terms are used for different situations, depending on what kind of relationship the speaker wants to convey. This gives a direct reason for Somali kinship attrition. With generational changes, some children may be less aware of all the kin terms for cousins. *Walaal* may be their norm, which would definitively impact their usage for kin terms in English. Helander's data provides a clearer understanding of the *walaal* distinction in Somali kinship.

The studies' inconsistencies regarding *walaal* may be a result of different methods of collection used by the researchers, change within the community over time, variation based on social differences, or other unknown reasons. Perhaps people with different strengths of faith, regional backgrounds, classes, genders, or other groups use *walaal* differently. Because there were so many inconsistencies in their data collected in Somalia, there may be even larger variation occurring between refugees in Columbus. Not only are they separated from family in Somalia, but they are also surrounded by American culture, where family and culture are constructed differently. Since the English kinship system emphasizes nuclear relationships and shows family is less collective than in the Somali kinship system, this may alter how Somali immigrants use kinship terms. However, there are a multitude of other factors that may impact how Somali kinship terms may change upon contact with English. Based on the previous studies, it is evident that cultural and social practices are related to language shifts. Potential factors encouraging maintenance of kinship terms are connections to Somalis in Somalia, close-knit extended families, higher proficiency in the Somali language, and strong identification as a Somali. Finding out the answers to the questions outlined in Section II will show to what extent culture and kinship is preserved in Columbus, what kinship terms are preserved and what terms are lost, what factors influence this, and to what extent are kin changes related to social changes.

V. METHODOLOGY

A. Selection of Sample

In order to gather data on the preservation of Somali culture and kinship in Columbus, eighteen people were interviewed. Of these, seven were first-generation Somali immigrants, which are here defined as those who moved to America after they were five years of age. Of the first-generation participants, one was 22 years old, while the rest were between 33 and 73. The remaining eleven were classified as second-generation Somalis, either born in America or

moving under age five. All of the second-generation participants were between 19 and 25 years old. When recruiting participants, I told them they would be answering questions about their family and culture and use of Somali language. To recruit respondents, I went to a Somali Students' Association meeting and spoke to the vice president of the club. He offered to let me post a blurb on the group's Facebook page, since it had over 3,000 people following it. This approach had a disappointing outcome, as only one person contacted me in connection with the post. The other participants were selected by contacting friends of one of my friends. Most of my participants knew each other and were members of either the Somali Students' Association or the Muslim Students' Association. After finishing my interviews, I would ask participants if they knew of anyone who would be willing to participate, and they would refer me to other students. Twelve of the respondents who were recruited in this manner were students at The Ohio State University. Five of the others were adults taken from an ESL program a few miles from campus. I recruited these through an acquaintance who had been running the program for years, whom I had met in the introductory Somali class I had taken at Ohio State. He chose people who had been in the ESL program for at least one year who would also be comfortable talking to a stranger. The last recruit was the instructor of the course I had taken. Many of the respondents came from different areas of Columbus. Of the students at Ohio State, the neighborhoods in Columbus they lived in varied. Two were from southeast Columbus, four were from the northeast side, and five were from northwest suburbs. This is in contrast to the first-generation respondents, all of whom lived in the northeast area of Columbus, where central Ohio's Community Research Partners have found the Somali population to be at its most dense (2009).

Gender	First Generation	Second Generation
Female	3	7
Male	4	4

Table 4. Sample of respondents

B. Methods of Collecting Data

Informants were interviewed using a questionnaire designed to investigate the research questions outlined at the end of Section II about the dynamics of Somali culture, kinship, and

their transformations. The questionnaire was divided into three general categories dealing with the following topics respectively: demographic information, questions about attitudes toward kinship terms, and cultural implications of kinship. The demographics section included questions on place of upbringing and language background, the questions about kinship terminology asked for elicitation of Somali kinship terms and how they were used by the participant, and the section on implications of cultural changes asked about participants' views of kinship organization (the questionnaire used for these interviews can be found in Appendix A). All interviews lasted an hour except for three, which lasted closer to thirty minutes. Eight respondents, all second-generation, consented to their responses being tape-recorded, and the other ten participants' responses were recorded by hand. These interviews were carried out within the course of two months, and respondents received \$20 for their time.

VI. ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

A. Demographics

Section A consisted of 18 questions designed to get as much background information as possible about where the participants lived, the composition of their town, where their families resided, and more.

1. Birthplace

Respondents' places of birth were across the globe. Of course, all seven of the first-generation respondents were born in Somalia, but the remaining eleven respondents were born on various continents. Five of the eleven second-generation participants were born in the Netherlands, one was born in Kenya, one was born in Canada, and four were born in the United States. All of the first-generation participants moved to America after age five, while all of the second-generation participants were living in America before their fifth birthday.

2. Family Distribution

All the first-generation immigrants were the first ones of their relatives to move to America and brought their own families with them, except for one who came alone, without a spouse or children. All eleven of the second-generation participants all had grown up with both parents in the United States, and all but two had continued to live with both parents at the time of the interview. One of the exceptions lived with only her mother because their father was deceased, and the other stopped living with his parents and siblings two years prior to the interview to

move in with his friends. The rest of the informants' extended families were scattered across the country and world. While two first-generation informants did not have other relatives in the United States, the sixteen other informants did. Every single participant had relatives currently living in Somalia, and they had extended family residing on continents aside from North America and Africa as well.

3. Neighborhood Composition and Education

The neighborhood composition of the participants was almost uniformly very Somali. This means that 15 of the 18 participants reported they currently lived in a neighborhood in Columbus with a strong Somali presence. The remaining three participants did not live in heavily Somali-populated areas. Between the participants, all but two had gone to public schools with people who lived around them. The remaining two were both second-generation informants who had gone to Catholic schools during pre-kindergarten and kindergarten in the Netherlands and after the move to America as well.

B. Use of and Attitudes Towards Kinship Terms

In Section B, twelve questions were asked of respondents regarding their use of kinship terms in Somali and English. These questions consisted of inquiries about fluency, connections to family in Somalia, actual terms used by respondents, and their attitudes towards different terms.

1. Fluency

Participants reported different degrees of fluency in and use of Somali. All four males and three females in the first generation were completely fluent in Somali, with it being their mother tongue. Of the seven females and four males in the second generation, all either learned Somali slightly before or at the same time as English. This varied depending on their birthplace. The five second-generation respondents who were born in either the United States (four respondents) or Canada (the remaining one) learned English at the same time as they learned Somali, while the six second-generation respondents born in the Netherlands (five respondents) or Kenya (one respondent) learned English after they learned Somali. Not all second-generation participants considered themselves fluent in Somali but all said they spoke English fluently and used it the most during their day. All informants of both generations spoke Somali to some degree with other members in their local community. The first-generation informants used Somali as their

preferred language, while the second generation always spoke some Somali with their parents at home but only sometimes spoke Somali with siblings and other family.

2. *Strength of Family Ties*

When asked about how often they kept in contact with family still in Somalia, almost half of the first-generation immigrants (three of the seven) reported holding strong ties to family back home, while only two of the eleven second-generation informants classified their ties as such. The rest of the informants held weaker ties, sometimes because they had never met their extended family and sometimes simply because they only had one or two family members still living there.

3. *Terms for Ascending Generation*

Almost every respondent used the Somali terms of address for the ascending generation, that is, their aunts, uncles, and parents. All respondents with the exception of two second-generation subjects used the Somali address terms for ‘aunt,’ *eeddo* or *habar*, and ‘uncle,’ *adeer* or *abti*. One of these had only paternal aunts and uncles in America and so they only knew and used the paternal Somali terms *adeer* (‘father’s brother’) and *eeddo* (‘father’s sister’). Since this respondent did not communicate with their maternal aunts and uncles at all, they avoided using Somali kinship terms to refer to them and chose to describe them in various other ways. The other respondent who did not use all the Somali aunt and uncle terms felt his aunts and uncles had equal respect statuses and thus referred to them by first name only. All of the respondents, including the two just mentioned, used the Somali terms for their parents, referring to and calling their mothers *hooyo* and fathers *aabbe*.

4. *Terms for Same Generation*

As far as siblings and cousins are concerned, there were several differences in the terms used by respondents. The choice of sibling terms used by respondents had a distinct distribution. The traditional term, *walaalo*, a general word for ‘sibling,’ was used by all seven of the first-generation informants but only one second-generation informant. Six second-generation informants instead used *abaayo* (‘sister’) and *aboowo* (‘brother’). According to two second-generation informants, these sibling terms are due to regional variation and are unrelated to generation. *Abaayo* and *aboowo* are said to be northern variants for ‘sibling,’ while *walaalo* is a central or southern variant. Since all of my first-generation respondents originated from Mogadishu in the south, they used *walaalo*. The remaining four second-generation respondents

referred to their siblings by their first names when speaking to others. While all four of these respondents said they knew the word *walaalo*, they only used it in an “endearing” manner, almost always using first names.

Regarding cousin terms, the traditional pattern of use was exhibited by three of the seven first-generation respondents. These respondents utilized all four of the cousin terms outlined by Lewis (1994) in Table 2 (*ina’abti*, *habar wadaag*, *ina’adeer*, and *ina’eeddo*), while only two of the eleven second-generation respondents used all of the Somali cousin terms from Table 2.

Another pattern for cousin terms was used by two second-generation informants and one first-generation informant. This group made only a two-way distinction between cousins, as compared to the traditional four-way distinction. The respondents’ two-way system used only *ina’abti* and *ina’adeer*. Though these terms respectively translate as ‘child of mother’s brother’ and ‘child of father’s brother,’ they become generalized to mean ‘child of mother’s sibling’ and ‘child of father’s sibling.’ Again, although this system only distinguishes between which of the speaker’s parents is blood-related to the cousin, the terms still come from the four-way traditional Somali terms detailed by Lewis (1994).

Yet another group, three first-generation informants and one second-generation informant, used Somali terms for sibling instead of the cousin terms. The first-generation informants used *walaalo*, the general ‘sibling’ term, while the second-generation informant used *abaayo* and *aboowo* for their respective female and male cousins.

Lastly, four second-generation respondents reported using strictly first names, and two second-generation respondents used the English word ‘cousin.’ While people of both generations said that using the Somali terms for cousins from Lewis (1994) again showed endearment, only the younger generation showed a strong preference for substituting the Somali terms for either first names or English terms. All six of these second-generation respondents were hard-pressed to accurately come up with the Lewis (1994) Somali cousin terms, saying they were too unfamiliar with the distinctions. When these respondents mentioned this, two said it was just easier to go without.

The terms used for parents, aunts, uncles, and siblings had somewhat uniform distributions. All eighteen respondents used the traditional parent terms, seventeen respondents used the aunt and uncle terms, and fourteen respondents used the sibling terms. Table 5 and Figure 3 summarize the less predictable use of cousin terms by the different generations of respondents.

Terms Used by Respondents for Cousins	RESPONDENTS			
	Generation 1		Generation 2	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
4-way distinction Somali cousin terms	2	1	--	2
2-way distinction Somali cousin terms	--	1	1	1
Somali general sibling term	2	1	--	--
2-way distinction Somali sibling term	--	--	1	--
First name for all cousins	--	--	2	2
English term "cousin" for all cousins	--	--	--	2
Subtotal	4	3	4	7
Grand Total	7		11	

Table 5. Findings of different generations' use of terms for cousins

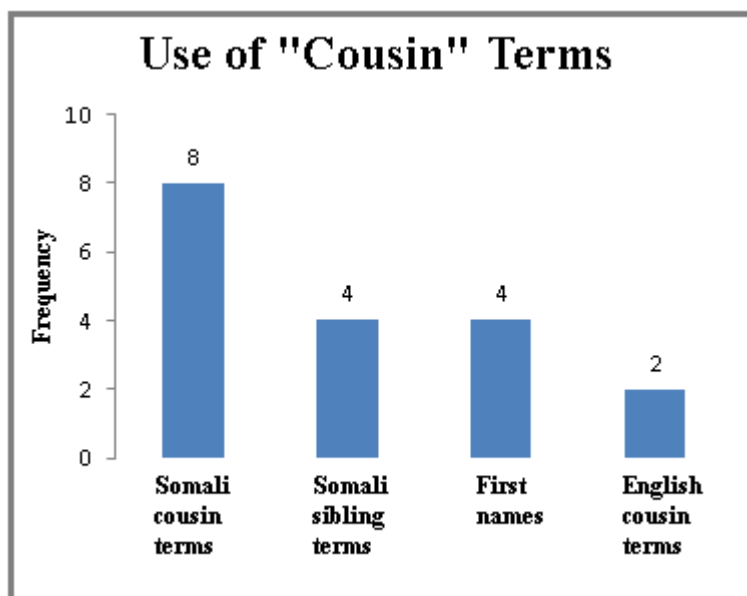


Figure 3. Simplified findings of use of cousin terms among all participants

5. Attitudes towards English Terms

When the respondents were asked about their attitudes towards using English kinship terms instead of Somali kinship terms, the first-generation respondents all said they would never think of using English instead of Somali for their family members. The second-generation respondents

had differing opinions. When the second-generation respondents were given the choice between using either Somali or English kinship terms, all eleven said they would only use Somali to refer to their parents, aunts, and uncles within their community. It even generated a laugh with four of the second-generation informants to think about referring to their parents as their ‘mother’ or ‘father.’ One second-generation respondent did say he might use the English word ‘uncle,’ but only “once in a blue moon,” and he would never use the word ‘aunt.’ Of all the informants, five respondents (all second-generation) mentioned the word “respect” during unprompted explanations for why they use Somali for the generation above them.

All seven second-generation informants stated that they were more likely to use the English term ‘cousin’ for cousins living in America than cousins living in Somalia, even if those cousins spoke English. Three of these informants explicitly said they identified with being American just as much or more than being Somali, and using the English term was an expression of solidarity with their fellow Somali-American cousins. These three informants said their choice to use the word ‘cousin’ strengthened their relationships with these family members because it acknowledged their shared identity.

C. Cultural Implications of Kinship

The last section of the questionnaire asked for responses to nine questions about how the practice of kinship relates to the social practices and overall culture of Somali immigrants and Somali-Americans. These questions had respondents elaborate on changes in Somali kinship use, parental practices within Somali families, cultural differences between Somali and American families, and maintenance of Somali conventions.

1. Differences between Somali and American Families

Respondents were asked if they believed American kinship relationships differed from Somali kinship relationships. Because the question could be interpreted in a variety of ways, I gave specific examples where differences could exist, such as with parental roles, respect, children’s behavior, or extended family. Six of the respondents spoke on the issue of respect between the two cultures. All of these were second-generation respondents who emphasized the importance of respecting their elders. However, it did not seem that Somali elders were particularly venerated; rather, all six respondents merely said that Somalis held elders in higher esteem than Americans held theirs. For example, two respondents specifically commented that

American children can treat their parents with disrespect, and one gave an example of an American child yelling and cursing at their parent in public, which would never happen in Somali culture. Another respondent said the division was less about Somalis and Americans and more about the world as a whole. According to this person, the western world is less concerned with respect than the non-western world. This view continued to be brought up by this respondent in other culture and family discussions. Other respondents mentioned other ways how respect surfaced differently in American and Somali culture. One first-generation informant described how horrified she was when she found out about nursing homes. In Somali culture, it is traditional for elders to move in with their grown children when they are too feeble to live alone. Putting an old parent in a home and visiting them on occasion is seen as “abandoning” them, according to this respondent. A second-generation respondent agreed with this point, calling nursing homes “taboo” in Somali culture. Another second-generation respondent raised the issue of chores as related to respect. He said, “Somalis never discuss chores. You just know you have to do them.” This is in contrast to American culture, where children who do chores might get an allowance from their parents, or they might not have chores at all. These respondents’ answers demonstrated their ideas about respect in parent-child relationships.

Many informants continued this discussion and turned to differences in general family values between Somalis, Somali-Americans, and Americans. Nine of the eighteen respondents made comments regarding this, with it being particularly popular among first-generation participants (five of the seven commented). Most if not all responses included messages about the unity of Somali families. Different participants referred to Somalis as “family-oriented,” “collectivist,” “more of a community,” “supportive,” and “communal.” Three participants explained how it is expected within their community that children do not move out of their parents’ home until they are married, compared to Americans who often move out at age 18 or during college. Two participants called American families “individualistic” or “self-centered.” One example of this was illustrated when a respondent told me his experiences working for a hotel. Often he would see families drop off their relatives who were coming to visit instead of making room for them within their house. He found this to be particularly stunning. To him, it sent the message that family is an “inconvenience” for Americans, further underlining the individualistic nature of American society. Overall, the opinions shared about the different values in Somali and

American families converged around this dichotomy, where there is a strong presence of community within Somali relationships but an absence within American relationships.

2. Parental Roles

All of the respondents were asked if their mothers and fathers had unique roles within the family. The first-generation respondents who I interviewed all said that the mother is meant to raise the children while the father works, and their families reflected that. However, two of the first-generation women held jobs along with their husbands in order to earn enough income for their families. When the second-generation respondents were asked about parental role differences, some echoed the sentiment of men working and women keeping house, but in reality their families had many different configurations. Four of the eleven second-generation respondents used the word “egalitarian” when describing their parents’ responsibilities within the family. Three other second-generation respondents described their parents as maintaining more traditional roles, where the father was always working and the mother had closer relationships with her children. The remaining four second-generation respondents felt their parents were neither egalitarian nor traditional in the Somali way. One of these four reported that her mother ran the finances and her father cooked, while another said their father ran the family finances while the mother helped out with school and friends. Yet another of the intermediate respondents shared that their father helped out with school and teaching them Islam while the mother raised them. The last respondent from this group said their mother was better with finances than their father and would always indulge the children’s wants.

3. Changes within Families

When asked if the use of Somali kinship terms had changed within families over time, six of the seven first-generation informants responded with a firm “no.” The other first-generation respondent said he noticed his children using only the English terms for their cousins and siblings, but the family members of his generation were steadfast in their Somali kin term use. Of the second-generation respondents, nine of the eleven mentioned having younger siblings who spoke less Somali than them. Three of these respondents with younger siblings said that they saw a clear trend: the younger the sibling, the more English they used with their family, referring to both kinship terms and their general language. One of these respondents said that his younger brothers could hardly even be considered bilingual because of how little Somali they could speak

or understand. This respondent stated that this was “clear” evidence that his younger brothers were going to grow up as “just Americans.”

4. American Effect on Kinship

Participants were asked how their kinship experience in America had affected their own family relationships. Many participants struggled with this question, with twelve ultimately saying that they did not feel there was an effect. However, six respondents did mention direct changes from American influence that they observed in their families. Two of these were from the first-generation, and the remaining four were second-generation. One of the first generation respondents divulged how her teenage daughter did not want to respect her wishes to wear a headscarf. Wearing a headscarf is a very important symbol of faith for Muslim women. Even though her daughter practiced Islam, she was still resistant to the idea of wearing it. In Somalia, there would have been no discussion at all, and her daughter would have had to wear the scarf (both because of society and because her mother wanted her to). However, since they moved to America, the mother has adjusted and taken a step back. Although she would strongly prefer her daughter to wear the scarf, the participant chose to give her daughter independence. The other first-generation respondent also said raising his children in America presented challenges. He stated that Somalis raise children in order to “give back to the community,” but Americans raise their children to be successful. The respondent had to balance these ideals in a way that did not ostracize his children from the American community but still maintained unity with their Somali family. Unsurprisingly, striking this balance did end up meaning his children were not as close with their extended family as he would have liked them to be, but he made the sacrifice because he believed it was “in their best interests.”

The second-generation respondents reported similar struggles with their parents. One respondent said their parents were different from other Somali parents because they raised their children to “cultivate a sense of questioning.” This respondent felt that their family was a “mesh” between an American family and a Somali family, and although they were close with their extended family, they were not as close as they would be had they stayed in Somalia. Another second-generation student described a “degree of separation between parents and kids because of their different experiences.” However, she acknowledged that her parents tried very hard to understand her life, and that they became “less controlling after being in the United States.” A third second-generation participant said she was not sure what her parents were like before they

came to America, but she felt that American culture was very present in her immediate family's lifestyle. The last second-generation participant felt that her family had not changed after she was born, but she described her family as a whole as Somali-American, although her parents did immigrate. While she did not elaborate on how her relationships with her extended family were affected, she did believe her immediate family belonged in a space between Somalis and Americans. This concept of a being "in between" or in a "third space" appeared with the three other second-generation participants while discussing this topic, demonstrating its importance to their identity and likely their linguistic choices.

5. Maintenance of Somali Practices

Depending on their generation, the participants were asked either if they plan to teach any future children to speak Somali and maintain Somali customs, or if they have already done so. Every single second-generation informant said they wished to carry on speaking the language with their own families, though some recognized it would be difficult, and one admitted it might not be practical if they married a non-Somali. Two mentioned possibly implementing rules such as not using English inside the house to force their children to use it daily. Five of the eleven second-generation respondents also expressed a willingness to let their future children determine their own set of values. Of these five, two informants were so adamant about their children's independence because they appreciated how much independence their parents granted them while growing up. It impacted them so strongly while they were amidst other strict families that they wanted to emulate their parents.

The seven first-generation participants who had actually immigrated to the United States all had children at the time of the interview, except for one. He expressed a strong desire to teach any future children the Somali language. His fellow first-generation participants with children all stated that their kids knew and used Somali. The extent to which they used it, however, varied depending on their strictness with their children. Five of the six others said their children were fluent in Somali, while the other one said her children would occasionally speak in Somali to her but more often than not would talk to her in English. Though the other first-generation informants mentioned this sometimes happening with their children, they assured me their children were indeed fluent. All six with children said they raised their kids to practice Islam. Further, three of these six said they would hope their children have bonds with their relatives as strong as they themselves do, but they cannot force it on them. Thus, no matter what the intent

with the parent is, in the end their children will have their own identity that they have created. Whether they choose to align themselves with their Somali roots is up to them.

VII. CONCLUSION

Through the course of this study, many questions were posed to Somali immigrants in the Columbus diaspora to discover if and how kinship and cultural dynamics were affected. Specifically these questions were explored to reveal the answers to three questions:

To what extent do Somalis in Columbus and their children preserve traditional Somali kinship terms?

Are there differences in kinship term use across generations?

Does language loss imply a loss of culture and kinship terminology in particular?

My hypothesis was that loss or preservation of the Somali kinship system in Columbus would be most likely influenced by the degree to which Somali immigrants preserve or change their social relationships and cultural practices within the family.

Through conducting interviews with eighteen Somali-Americans of different genders, ages, and generations, it was found that the kinship terms consistent across respondents are those between parents and children, while terms for aunts, uncles, siblings, and cousins have a wider range of variation. From the data collected, 43% of the first-generation participants reported having stronger ties to their extended family as compared to 18% of second-generation participants. This seems to explain why first-generation participants were more likely to use the traditional Somali terms outlined by Lewis (1994) for relatives of their own generation. The fact that second-generation participants were less likely to use the traditional cousin terms may be both because of their proximity to each other and the lack of emphasis on collectivity within American families. Because many of the second-generation participants have relatives all around the world, they come in contact with them less than if the entire extended family resided in Somalia. Cousin terms, then, are less relevant in the daily life of a Somali-American. Since all but two of the participants attended public schools in their local district, second-generation

students' exposure to Americans around them may have affected their conceptualization of family relationships, leading to a weaker emphasis on collectivity.

Indeed, without being asked, four of the eleven second-generation participants reported identifying more as Americans or Somali-Americans than Somali, with some referring to a kind of third space as children of immigrants. Not only did their identities become more fluid, but also did their language use. All four of the second-generation participants who included "American" in their self-identification used first names to refer to their siblings instead of using Somali. Two of these respondents also used only first names to refer to their cousins, while the other two used the Somali cousin terms with the 2-way distinction (*ina'adeer* and *ina'abti*). Interestingly, one of the second-generation informants who used the 2-way distinction expressed particular frustration with the organization of his nuclear family. His more American values meant he placed a larger emphasis on his goals to be a good college student, which disagreed with his parents' values that he take care of his younger siblings. His alignment to American values caused a large enough rift between him and his parents that he moved out, something almost unheard of for Somali children. Yet, he continued to regularly visit his family and use Somali-oriented language with them. Though there are striking differences between American and Somali culture, from his example one's identity is still not a clear predictor of linguistic or cultural practice.

More second-generation respondents expressed having a kind of peer relationship with their elders, having mutual respect for one another, than being part of a family hierarchy where elder authority is more dominant. This type of relationship was the reason for one second-generation participant saying he used first names for his aunts and uncles. This idea of "mutual respect" did not occur solely with aunts and uncles, however. Of the four second-generation participants who said their parents had egalitarian responsibilities with the family, three of those said their parents allowed them to do their own thinking or were "progressive." The three with "progressive" parents were more likely to use first names for family members of their generation, but all still used Somali with the ascending generation. From this we cannot conclude that progressive parents had a strong effect on their child's use of Somali.

Although data from this study came from only two generations of immigrants, it is clear evidence that changes in terms of address are manifestations of changing systems of relationships. How kinship terms are maintained, lost, or altered affects the importance of kin relationships. Though every second-generation informant said they would like their children to

be proficient in Somali, it is more difficult for groups to maintain their language as more generations grow up in a different country with a different language, culture, and values. The effects of a America on the preservation of Somali cultural practices associated with family and kinship reveal broader implications for the preservation of cultural values and traditions of all diaspora communities. The results from this study hint that future generations of immigrants will continue to lose more of their culture and kinship until they fully assimilate to the host culture.

Appendix A

Interview Questionnaire

Demographics and language background

- Place of birth
- Age
- What different places have you lived since birth, and for how long? Who raised you?
- What members of your family first came to the US? Did you, your parents, or grandparents first immigrate?
- Who do you live with?
- What members of your family live in America? Do any of your relatives live somewhere else?
- Were people in your neighborhood mostly Somalis or non-Somalis? Are people in your current neighborhood mostly Somalis or non-Somalis?
- Where did you go to school as a child? What city, public/private, school composition

Use of and Attitudes Towards Kinship Terms

- Do you speak Somali? Where did you learn it? Does your family speak it at home?
- Do you still have relatives in Somalia? Do you keep in touch?
- Do you use Somali and/or English terms to address the members of your family?
- If Somali, what Somali terms do you use to address your ____? (Appendix B as visual)
 - M, F, Z, B, MB, MZ, FB, FZ, MBC, MZC, FBC, FZC
- Even if you don't use them, do you know all the Somali terms for different relatives?
- How do you feel about using English kinship terms such as "Mother" and "Father"?
- How do you feel about using "Aunt" and "Uncle"?
- If English terms used, why? Do you think this has had an effect on your family relationships? What effect has it had?

Cultural Implications of Kinship

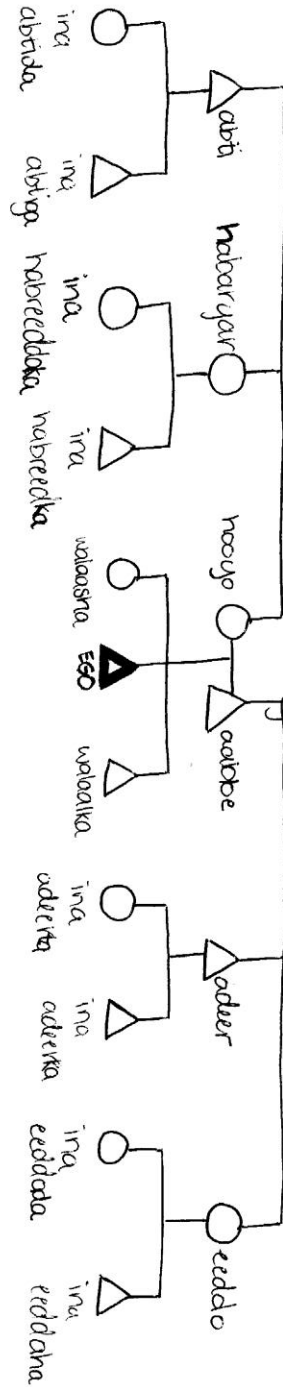
- Do you think American kinship relationships differ from Somalian kinship relationships? Do you see differences with parental roles, respect, children's behavior, extended family, etc?
- What are different responsibilities of your family members in the home? Do your parents have say over different things?
- Have you noticed any changes in the use of Somali kinship terms in your family over time?
- How has your kinship experience in America affected your family relationships?
- Do you plan to teach your kids Somali if you have your own family? Do you plan to maintain Somali family roles?
- If you have your own family, did you raise them with Somali customs?

Appendix B Somali Kin Terms

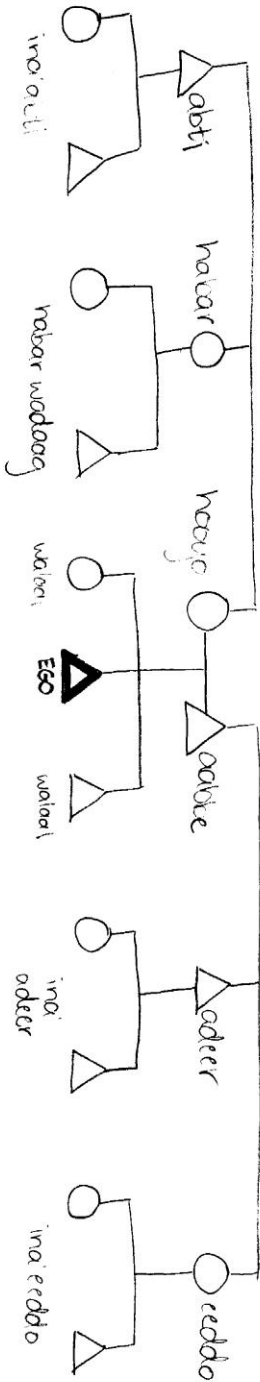
Rachel Castle

Somali Kin Terms
according to Jilbrill

△ = male
○ = female



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